

AUSTRALIA MY COUNTRY

My grandfather Richard William Stevens died in Griffith Base Hospital on the 6th September 1996 at the age of 71 years. Born in Canterbury Sydney 1924, Dick Stevens' life took him around the world, spending the later part of his life living in Griffith. When he was sixteen years old he put his age up to join the army. His time with the British Occupational Forces and the National Service took him to Japan, Borneo and Korea.

He was a member of the "Purple Devils", a Commando group reviled by Tokyo Rose during World War II after an engagement in which the 2/6 Independent Commando 100 squadron suffered a loss of 14 with 24-25 wounded but accounted for 300 Japanese troops during the Buna campaign in Papua New Guinea. After the war he stayed with the army for some time before retiring as a Sergeant Major and became a deep sea diver with off-shore drilling rigs and with bridge foundations.

Richard Stevens and his brother George were brought up by their mother because of their fathers' commitments to the airforce. Their mother had them taught swimming. Dick went on with the sport to swim with the Australian breaststroke team at the British Occupational Forces games in Japan. He was also a member of the Army Athletics team and the swimming team and the water polo team in 1949-51, 1953-54 and 1957-58.

During the war he experienced death, his best friend died in his arms. He also experienced the taking of a life. Something that he remembered for the remaining years of his life.

Mr Stevens was first married to Jean Hellier and had one son Christopher Stevens. Then was later married to Dawn Beaumont. Before retiring Dick spent many years as a swimming coach and pool manager in small country towns. He enjoyed teaching young children to swim and was always an active member in the community giving freely of his time.

Mr Stevens moved to the Griffith area about 15 years ago and worked as swimming pool manager at Whitton, a town in the Riverina area. He was a foundation member of the Griffith mens' Probus club and was actively involved in the YMCA in Sydney and in Brisbane.

Dick Stevens was a member of the Leeton RSL and Leeton Legacy, greatly involved in music and worked for the Talking Books for the Blind. During the past few years he has been a Squadron sponsor of the 12th Platoon B Company of the First Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka. Dick was one of four or five Commandos who visited the Platoon talking to recruits, counselling them and generally taking an interest in them. "They'd be there when we raised the platoon, they'd come down to watch them get their hair cut the first time and say g'day and come back after four weeks and have a beer with the platoon when they had their first beers for four weeks" said Sergeant

Andrew Green. "They'd come down and watch "the challenge" and then watch the Platoon march out. Due to his recent stroke Dick Stevens was unable to attend the march out this time".

His greatest sacrifice was for his country. He contracted malaria and scrub typhus whilst fighting for the freedom of my country. These diseases were largely responsible for his heart by-pass surgery in 1996 which lead to his death.

Dick often said if he had his life to live again he wouldn't do anything differently.

MY GRANDFATHER, MY HERO



NEW SOUTH WALES
BRANCH

RETURNED
SERVICES
LEAGUE

ANZAC ESSAY COMPETITION

PRESENTED TO BEN STEVENS

IN RECOGNITION OF A MERITORIOUS ENTRY

IN TORONTO SUB BRANCH SECTION 3

WHICH HAS GAINED 1ST PLACE IN

THE COMPETITION FOR THE YEAR 1997

[Signature]

PRESIDENT



[Signature]

HON. SECRETARY